

Echoes of Agony

A Collection of Dark Tales And One-Act Plays

By

Ali Zaka (AZD)

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Title : Echoes of Agony: A Collection of Dark
Tales and One-Act Plays

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Synopsis

This book is a debut collection of Dark Tales and One-Act Plays. There are 6 short stories followed by two One-Act plays. Mane, the protagonist of the first short story makes a desperate attempt to escape the Matrix, John, the protagonist of the second short story is in search of a messiah, Abuja, the protagonist of the 3rd short story suffers in silence, Amy and Elias are destined for the ultimate disaster, Susan attempts to do the unthinkable, the dead are bringing mysterious messages, duty vs desire and the two dead ringers are stuck in the middle of nowhere with no redemption in sight.

Dedicated

To the thorns of life and echoes of agony...

Foreword

Writing a short story has always been a formidable endeavour as there is absolutely no space for anything superfluous and the writer has to weave a rich tapestry having a compact unified effect in order to make a vital connection with the readers. Going through the collection of short stories and One-Act Plays by Ali Zaka (AZD), one does not have a feeling that the writer is embarking on a literary journey with his first collection. What makes him stand out from the contemporary short story writers is the claustrophobic vision of modern life in which the individual tries to comprehend life which is essentially incomprehensible resulting in anguish

and unparalleled frustration with no way out. Most of his stories provide us with a profound wealth of insight into a chaotic and indifferent life in which individuals find themselves eternally trapped. Furthermore, his dark tales and plays portray the themes of guilt, madness, revenge and the crimes committed in the name of love.

The writer seems to be an inborn storyteller with a

compulsion to write and relieve his burden by evoking powerful emotions and establishing indispensable empathy with the readers within no time. To me, a new star has emerged on the literary horizon which will soon eclipse the others with his brilliance and luminosity.

Wishing him all the best!

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No Way Out

"Where am I? Where the heck am I? Not again," shouted Mane. "You're exactly where you're supposed to be. NWO is inevitable. NWO is an inescapable reality," replied Shoaib.

"It's a lie. I was free. I felt it. I saw that blue sky."

"It can only happen in your dreams. There is no such thing as unadulterated freedom. NWO is all there is. There is no escape. You should embrace your reality. It'd be good for your mental health," said Ravi. "Are you kidding me? We're chained here. We cannot even think freely. And all those drugs to tame us? It's a sick joke. Someone has to break the code. The Matrix isn't impenetrable. I'll be the one to set all of you free. I know, I'm the chosen one." There was a sound of muffled laughter all around as nobody at NWO actually believed him.

Everyone at NWO knew that there was no way one could get out of the maze. There was a reason why it was called NWO (No Way Out). "You're not the first one who has tried to escape. Millions have tried and millions have failed. There were people better than you, stronger than you who couldn't hack it. There were men of focus and they remained stuck in the labyrinth their whole life. What makes you think that you can do it?

It's the hope that kills you. Freedom is an illusion, son. Stop nursing these radical thoughts and get back to work," said one of the prisoners. "But, there has to be a way. There is always something. If freedom is an illusion, why do I have an idea of freedom in my mind? Who planted it? Surely not NWO. Freedom is real. No matter, how difficult and dismal the situation is, I'll take my chances. I know that Samuel knows the way. Samuel, you once said that the Matrix can be defeated. Please, help me. For the sake of the millions who couldn't do it. The air is full of echoes of agony. My freedom will be a tribute to those souls," said Mane. "Impressive speech son, but words are all that you have. That path is too narrow, too long, too lonely and too dark for you. And even if you somehow manage to escape, there is no guarantee that there'll be freedom. So, just forget about it," replied Samuel.

"I wanna take my chances. I'll take my chances. I'm desperate. Show me the way. I'm on my knees." Samuel knew that it was a well-nigh impossible task to escape and he had no intention of helping Mane, but, Mane's desperation forced him to change his mind.

Therefore, he decided to help him. "You're gonna have to complete some tasks. They may seem pretty easy to hack but rest assured, they'll test your spirit."

"Tell me, what do I have to do to escape this hell? I'd do anything."

"First, you have to earn a certain amount of money. Once you have reached a certain threshold, you'll be transferred to the alpha hall. You'll be one step closer to your destination. Alpha Hall is reserved for those alpha males who willingly choose to impregnate a lady. They want a generation of Alphas.

Once you have impregnated a lady, you'll be able to achieve the highest level a prisoner at NWO can hope to

achieve. You'll become one of the most precious entities around the Alpha Hall. You'll win their trust and they'll shift you to a room where you won't find any cameras. There'll be no surveillance whatsoever. That room is the only place where self-mutilation is possible. Remember, you're only useful there as long as you donate your healthy sperm to the organization. If you choose genital self-mutilation, you'll be of no use to them. That'd be the only way to escape. Legend has it that useless entities are supposed to be shifted to the exit room. No one has ever tried genital self-mutilation and therefore no one has ever been shifted to the exit room. If you manage to do that, you'll be able to win your freedom."

"That's utterly gross and unthinkable, Samuel. You have gotta be kidding me. How can I let another innocent soul get stuck into this hellhole after everything I've been through. I will not donate my sperm. Another soul will be hellbound. No soul deserves this eternal punishment. And genital self-mutilation? That is worse than death. I won't do it." "Freedom has a price, son. Remember, no soul has ever witnessed the exit room because no soul has ever been this desperate. You want your freedom, earn it. Let me reiterate, genital self-mutilation is the only way you can become a useless entity for them and useless entities have no place at NWO." Mane was absolutely desperate. He decided to go full steam ahead.

It took him one year to reach the Alpha Hall. He impregnated a lady to reach the highest level possible. Now, there was only one thing to do namely genital self-mutilation. This was by far the most physically and mentally painful task. He had to do it. He had come this far and now was not the time to quit. Though it was an incredibly agonising task, he did it.

Everyone was shocked. The NWO hierarchy decided to punish him in the most brutal fashion possible. He was

kicked out of the Alpha Hall. He became a pariah. As per the NWO rules, he was supposed to be thrown into the exit room. Now, freedom seemed possible. "All my sacrifices were not in vain. I did it for me. I did it for those souls. I did it for everyone. Long live resistance!" He entered the exit room.

There was a colossal door with a "No exit" sign in that room. He walked towards that door. He tried to open it but it was locked. Suddenly, there was an announcement. "If you wish to open this door, you have to answer three questions," the voice on the speaker informed him.

"I'm ready to answer. Just let me go. I can't take it anymore." "First question, Have you ever felt freedom?

"Yes, I have. I feel it in my bones."

"Second question, "How would you define freedom?"

"I don't know. Maybe freedom is....it is one's ability to do what one truly wants. Freedom is listening to your heart. Freedom is conquering the fear of being judged. Freedom is pursuing your passion. Freedom is one's ability to think freely."

"And the last question, "What did you see in your dreams?"

"I was lying on green grass. It was a beautiful day. I could see a clear, blue sky. There was silence. There was solitude. I felt peace."

"Congratulations! You're the first man in the history of NWO to come this far. The door will be unlocked in 3, 2 and 1."

The door unlocked and Mane rushed towards the other side. He went outside. There was a huge building in front of him.

A silence and then there was a deafening noise. Loud bursts of laughter could be heard all around. There was pandemonium and consistent chants in that building, "Whole freaking show! You suck! You've been played. This was the greatest prank in the history of NWO." Mane was absolutely flabbergasted. He ran frantically and eventually bumped into a wall. On that wall, the following words were written, "No Way Out (NWO)".

The Voices

John was waiting for his turn. That was the twentieth time he had been visiting the psychiatrist in the last month. That showed the level of his desperation. He had tried everything to crush the voices in his head but to no avail. The more he tried to silence them, the louder they grew. The voices were not always there. In fact, there was a time when he could enjoy unadulterated moments of silence. John remembered exactly when the voices first began to appear. He was seven years old when one night he got overwhelmed by a barrage of unbearable voices. That was the same night when a tragedy of the highest order befell him.

Ever since that fateful night, he had been getting shattered, battered and bruised by the demons in his head but, he had not given up. He was suffering but he never quit. His near and dear ones couldn't empathise. They couldn't help him and that was the greatest tragedy according to him.

John was pretty sure that the psychiatrist he was visiting this time around had a magical formula to silence the uninvited, agonising voices once and for all. The wait was finally over and he went into his room. John was

uncharacteristically erratic that day. The moment he entered the private room of the psychiatrist, he started crying, "Please, silence them. I know you can. You're a messiah everybody was talking about. Make them disappear. I can't take it anymore." The psychiatrist was composed as he tried to calm him down and

asked him to tell exactly what those voices were all about. "Son, believe me, everything's gonna be alright. If you really want me to help you, you have to calm down first. Tell me, what exactly is bothering you?"

'The voices,' he replied.

'You need to be more precise, son. Don't worry, we'll work on it. We'll make them disappear. Now, tell me when exactly did they first start bothering you?'

'When I was seven years old. I was attacked by them. Since then I have been suffering. There is no escape. They just don't go away. The pain is intense and unrelenting. I hope you can assuage my pain,' replied John. The psychiatrist wanted to delve into the deepest recesses of his mind. So, he came up with more questions; "What exactly do you hear? What do they say?" he asked.

'I don't know. I mean they don't make sense. I have never been able to explain what exactly is going on in my mind. I hear things like "Pour more money", "the divorce", "that oxygen mask wasn't working", "the dreams", "Religion", "life hereafter". I have been pouring money since I was 17 but they don't go away. "The divorce, the dreams, the dream regarding the responsibilities, the sands of time are running out etc.," I have been trying to find a solution. Please, do something. They're unbearable.' The psychiatrist definitely felt sorry for him. He knew that John was a lost cause. He prescribed him anaesthetic drugs and some psychedelics. 'Take these regularly and you'll be fine, son.' That broke John's heart. This wasn't something new. He had heard these words on numerous occasions. He had been using these drugs for such a long time but they didn't help. John was utterly hopeless when he bid adieu to the psychiatrist.

John knew that there was only one way to silence the voices and he had been trying to avoid that for such a long time. 'If only I could erase my memories. People say that silence is gold, it is peaceful but they're wrong. Only pure silence guarantees peace. Pure silence is a privilege my miserable soul cannot afford. This silence? What a joke! This silence is the loudest thing. It is an eternal punishment. I can't go on like this. I have to do something radical now. I have poured a tremendous amount of money but the voices keep getting stronger. "The mask, the divorce, the dreams, religion, guilt, the life hereafter," it wasn't my fault. Wish I could erase my memories. All my good memories have been replaced by dust and ashes. I

have tried everything. Sadly, it has been so long that I have been righting the wrong. Sometimes, self-effacement becomes an obligation. I have to do it. I have no other choice. It's about time I silenced the voices once and for all.' Those were his last words before he shot himself in the head. It remained a mystery whether or not those voices finally disappeared. Only he could tell, but he was No More.

The Cassandra Curse

Abuja was endowed with an uncanny ability to foresee things. He was indeed a modern-day seer. He could predict things accurately but there was one problem; nobody believed him. Although he always got it right, people around him never paid heed to his advice. He was remarkably similar to the Trojan priestess, Cassandra. Cassandra was a Greek mythological character who was cursed to utter true prophecies, but nobody ever believed her.

Abuja always thought that his ability to predict the future events was a gift from the heavens and an unparalleled blessing. But, now this blessing had somehow transformed into a giant curse. "What exactly is the use of this supreme power to predict things when nobody is willing to believe me? Maybe, I should quit," he thought. His younger brother Jonah was the only person on the entire planet who actually believed him. It was indeed an excruciatingly painful feeling for him when people brutally denounced his predictions.

He was not always in possession of this strange power. In fact, in his early childhood, he always thought that he was an utterly worthless creature for everyone around him took him for granted. He had no special talent and nobody ever took him seriously. One night he prayed; "O God, why did you ever create such a despicable, an utterly untouchable creature?

"Why didn't you grant me some special powers? Please, bless me with something special so that people around me start appreciating my presence." The president of the immortals answered his prayers. Soon, he realised that he had the power to predict future events. He could actually see things that belonged to the realms of the unseen. After this sudden realisation, every single event of his life was like a *déjà vu*.

It didn't take him long before he started warning his near and dear ones about the consequences of their actions. He once predicted that there would be a chaotic quarrel that would force his family members to flee their hometown. He warned his parents, but they didn't believe him and eventually things unfolded exactly as Abuja had predicted. Everyone around him was shocked, but then they thought that this must have been a fluke. With the passage of time his ability to predict events had been enhanced as he could write down the sequence of events that were about to happen with remarkable accuracy. But, to his surprise people still didn't believe

him. "How is this even possible? I mean I have predicted tremendous amount of events with accuracy and people still don't believe me. It is indeed an agonising feeling;

"You know that your loved ones will descend into chaos, they will suffer if they don't listen to you and you still can't convince them. I love my family more than anything else in this world and I don't want them to suffer. That's why I always warn them, but almost invariably they make the wrong decisions. I am getting sick and tired of this feeling. I believe that this so-called greatest blessing has become a cause of an enormous amount of pain and suffering for me. Sometimes, getting what one wants is a tragedy."

Jonah too, suffered a lot because he actually believed every single word Abuja uttered. Abuja once decided to say goodbye to his powers. He decided not to say anything about the future. But, Jonah convinced him to continue because he knew that his brother could help a lot of people if he actually managed to make them believe him. Abuja now started sharing his thoughts with Jonah on a regular basis. He decided to share his visions of the unseen with him. Now, it was Jonah's duty to warn the people around him regarding the ramifications of their reckless actions. But quite unfortunately, Jonah too, suffered the same fate as people didn't believe him. Maybe Abuja's curse had been transferred to Jonah as well. Now, it was Jonah's turn to get frustrated. He got dejected pretty soon. Abuja once again decided to remain silent for the rest of his life. People around him said that he was somehow responsible for their misfortunes.

Abuja too, started thinking that disastrous events were unfolding only because he was predicting them. "Maybe, I'm the one to blame. Maybe, if I stop sharing my thoughts with others, these events will stop unfolding. I have always warned people and my words have never been able to change their minds." Abuja indeed stopped speaking, but his visions of the unseen never stopped. He could still see the future, he could still predict things with accuracy. His silence never assuaged his pain rather it augmented it. Jonah now once again started persuading him.

"You know that silence is a major sin when your words can halt a disaster. You should keep warning people and I promise you they'll listen to you one day."

Abuja was unfazed. He had made up his mind. "I would never predict things especially when I know that people are never going to believe me. Tell me which one is worse; to be able to predict future events and never to be believed or

to share the vulnerabilities of the common lot? I don't want this power anymore. I want to be a common man. I want to make mistakes because this is the only way I can take responsibility for my actions. I want to make my

decisions without having any sort of prior knowledge of the future. The knowledge of the unseen is not a blessing by any stretch of the imagination. It is in fact a curse of the highest order especially when you know that nobody ever believes you." These were the last words Abuja ever uttered. He never uttered a word afterwards and suffered in silence. This time, not even Jonah could change his mind.

Kiss of Death

"She was the best of women. She was the worst of women. She was the symbol of sweetness. She was toxicity personified. She was the purest of creatures. She was evil incarnate. She was the greatest source of joy. She was the greatest source of agony. In short, she was the **** of the century." That was Elias' assessment of Amy's character.

Elias was an extraordinary guy, an absolutely complete package. He drew the attention of the ladies almost invariably whenever he was around them. His enviable look, his talent, his superior intellect, his extraordinary athleticism and his charming personality had turned him into a pure narcissist. That perhaps was one of the cardinal reasons why he had never fallen in love with any of the girls who had attempted to lure him into their trap. It was well-nigh an impossible task to seduce him. His sister used to warn him that pure narcissists are hellbound once they fall in love. "Love is a disaster, especially for a narcissist like you. Wanna know what love stands for? L means Land of sorrows and suffering, the letter O refers to the ocean of tears, V stands for valley of death and finally, E refers to the end of life." Elias used to make fun of her sister. "Are you kidding me? Where do you get this stuff from? It's ridiculous yet funny and that I can guarantee. And don't worry I'll never fall in love. Land of sorrows....LOL." "That would be good for you," replied her sister.

Time flew and Elias never confronted a girl who could ensnare him. But, then came Amy, the one and the only girl who was irresistible even for a pure narcissist like Elias. She was his new classmate but he wanted her to be his soulmate the moment he saw her for the very first time. Elias was awestruck by her charming personality. Her beauty was unsurpassed. It was a love at first sight for Elias. Of course, he could not keep his feelings in check for too long. He was totally vulnerable for the first time in his life and that was something new for him. He immediately expressed his feelings and to his sheer delight, the feelings were reciprocated. Elias was on cloud nine. Like a traditional lover, he totally surrendered himself. Elias and Amy were in love and everything seemed right with the world. They had a wonderful chemistry. They had developed similar interests. In fact, they could talk about any topic for hours without getting bored. Every single night they listened to "There is a light that never goes out" by The Smiths. Apparently, it was a match made in heaven. Everything was going perfectly until the

night when Amy snapped and bombarded Elias with poisonous words. That was the night when Elias actually proposed her.

"Falling in love with you was the best thing that ever happened to me. It's ecstasy."

"The feeling is mutual, my love," replied Amy.

"So, when are we getting married?"

"What? Are you out of your mind?

"What did I do? All true lovers, all soulmates must grow old together. Don't you think so?"

"No way. You're not the one for me. You're not pure husband material. I hate the very idea of marriage as well. And listen to me very carefully, never ever repeat these

stupid words again. Marriage is absolutely out of the question. I have a career to make. I wanna be a bureaucrat. Marriage is the ultimate obstacle for me. I hope this is the first and the last time we're having this conversation."

It was a bolt from the blue as Elias gave her no reason whatsoever to react the way she did. From that night on, it was pretty clear for Elias that she was not the one but he couldn't quit. He knew exactly what she was all about and yet he chose to love her passionately.

Amy kept abusing him, kept manipulating him but Elias could never complain. He was head over heels and she knew it. That was the beginning of the end for Elias. Although their relationship was going nowhere, Elias remained delusional. He was always lying to himself. "Maybe she is mistreating me because she had a difficult childhood. Maybe she is the way she is because she was a problem child and her father abandoned her when she was just a kid. Maybe she is toxic because she has been through hell. Maybe, a plethora of undeserved failures have turned her into this monstrous creature. She needs some time, she needs space. She deserves empathy and love." That's how Elias deluded himself. He did not want to give up because in his mind Amy was the perfect girl for him. Little did he know that Amy had other ideas. She could never marry a simp. Amy was an image-conscious lady. She never let Elias tell anyone about the love affair.

"I am ecstatic and I want to discuss this relationship with my sister and my friends."

"Never, promise me, you'd always keep it a secret."

"But why?"

"Elias, my love, you're so naive and innocent. Don't you know that relationships are brittle? The best way to protect

your relationship is to keep it a secret. You're my best-kept secret and I hope I'm your best-kept secret as well." Red flags after red flags and still Elias remained delusional.

Amy had been notorious for her multiple love affairs. Although she disputed the claim that she ever had any intense love affair. She was a beauty with a brain and that made her an enviable prospect. Nobody in his right mind could say no to her. But, beneath this facade of her perfect personality was her demonic character that remained hidden. Only Elias was unfortunate enough to battle that monstrous creature. Every night he suffered and every morning he woke up with a renewed spirit. He thought that good days were just around the corner but ever blind to fate, he was totally oblivious of the fact that he was sinking deep into a fatal territory. His decision to stay had consequences far more dangerous than anything he could have ever imagined.

Amy had total control now. Elias was a mere puppet and Amy was the one pulling the strings. His social media accounts, his WhatsApp and even his soul was hijacked by Amy and there was nothing he could do about that. "I am not the same Elias. I feel like I'm a robot, maybe even worse. All my activities are being monitored by her. I am not a free man anymore. I wish I could let her go. I love her, I despise her. She is living her life to the fullest. She talks to every single guy she finds attractive but I am not permitted to do the same although my intentions are pure. I am her slave and she'd never wanna marry her slave.

But most importantly she'd never let me go. I'm stuck and there's no way out. "Land of sorrows....." No, God, no, I want out."

Now, Elias was being bullied, manipulated and abused by Amy quite incessantly. He had the option to quit but he did not have the courage to do so for several reasons. She always

showed care after the chorus of abuse and somehow Elias always felt pampered in her company. Amy had become both panacea and poison for him. She was his first kiss, his first love. In fact, she was the one who taught him what love was. But, since that fateful night, she had never been the same. Now, Amy was playing a perfect game. They say that the ultimate bully ups the ante when the victim stops showing signs of resistance. She knew that Elias was crippled by his psychological paralysis. She even used to call him "Sweet Hamlet". Elias had an uncanny ability to remain silent no matter how much he was provoked. Amy would hurl abuses, calling him the

reason for everything that went wrong with her life. Elias never uttered a single word in return and suffered in silence. But silence was an error too. His silence was filled with painful screams.

"What have I ever done to deserve this? I am smitten, I can't imagine my life without her. Why doesn't she want to grow old with me if she truly is in love with me?" Elias was punished for his silence as well.

"You insult me when you resort to silence. I hurl countless abuses, I punish you but you never reciprocate because you're a hypocrite and not a saint. I am honest and that's why I say what I have in my mind. I apologize when I'm wrong. You don't utter a single word because you're afraid of hurting me but deep down it makes you sick to your stomach." One night Elias was so hurt by Amy's verbal onslaught that he decided to quit for good. But the moment he shared his thoughts with Amy, she started blackmailing him.

"Ok, you wanna leave? Leave right now. But, remember I'm going to commit suicide and I'll leave a suicide note as well. You'll be jailed both physically and mentally. You'll never get away with that. You know, I love you more than anything else in the world. You complete me." "Then why don't you marry me? shouted Elias. What kind of relationship is this? You don't want to live with me,

you don't want to live without me. You enjoy freedom but you never let me do the same. You don't want love, you want control, total control to manipulate another soul. This is bondage. I am deteriorating day by day. I was the loveliest of creatures before I fell in love with you and now look at me. No doubt, you've given me the best moments of my life. To be in your company, to talk to you for hours without interruption, to sit with you in a quiet corner, that's what I crave. But, You're not the same Amy. Now, you're nothing more than a cruel master. I did not subscribe to this. I want out."

Elias' health was deteriorating at a rapid pace. His sister couldn't help but notice that Elias was visibly perturbed and there was something seriously wrong with him. Upon her insistence, he finally broke his silence. He told her everything regarding his toxic relationship. "My God! What an absolute biatch! Elias, how could you bear all of that? How could you fall in love with a girl like her? My God! I warned you, my love. You're gonna have to do something. Look at you, this relationship will be the end of you. Why don't you leave her? You're a complete package. Almost every girl in the town craves your company."

"I can't do that. She's the one, she's my soulmate. I love her, I love her," Elias said in a dejected manner. "She doesn't let you talk to anyone. She has your Facebook password. She forced you to delete your WhatsApp. While she talks to every other guy in the town. What kind of hypocrisy is that? She is incredibly insecure and she wants control. There I just said it. You're a king under her control. Why don't you understand? Let me talk to her."

"No, no, please. She's gonna commit suicide. She's borderline and she's all alone."

"Oh, come on! Nobody does that. You don't know what girls are capable of. Even Satan learns his tricks from us ladies. We know how to control guys like you. Look, Elias, you're gonna have to quit this relationship otherwise you'll end up getting ruined. You've already had your share of undeserved suffering. It's about time you pulled the trigger."

"You'll never understand. I'm in love with her. She was my first kiss. She gave me the best moments of my life. She is my one true love. Although she's treating me like a dog, I can't leave. I'm stuck for eternity." Elias had tears in his eyes when he uttered these emotional words. His sister hugged him. He cried like a little kid. He was indeed helpless. He had nowhere to go. Meanwhile, Amy was now preparing for her exams. She knew that she had a real chance this time around. But, part of her was now feeling guilty as well. In her heart, she knew that she had ruined the career of an incredibly gifted guy. Maybe part of her was in love with Elias. She was in love with his innocence, his loyalty, his eloquence, his talent.

She just didn't want to marry a simp and Elias had been acting like a pure simp. Kissing his juicy lips was the best feeling for her, a feeling that she could never resist.

"You know what I love about you?"

"What? asked Elias in a delightful manner." "Your innocence and the purity of your soul." "And.....?"

"And your eyes. And...your smile.

"And.....?

"And your juicy lips. I could kiss you for hours and hours. I just can't resist it."

Amy was a mature and pragmatic lady. She always preferred her career over love. Furthermore, because of the childhood trauma, she wanted to marry an alpha male who could protect her. Elias was a soft guy. Therefore, she never entertained the idea of marrying him. She was solely focused on her career. But for Elias, Amy was his love, his career, his reason to live. Elias did everything in his power to help Amy achieve her ultimate goal. He was her motivation in the darkest of times. Nobody wanted her to be successful more than Elias. He loved her passionately and religiously and that was gonna be the cause of his ultimate downfall. Elias was living in bad

faith. He was hoping against hope. He was now pretty convinced that Amy was never gonna marry him but he kept on waiting. He wanted to give her one last chance. He was so emotionally invested that he couldn't imagine his relationship withering away in the blink of an eye. So, he decided to wait. He waited and waited and finally, Amy became a bureaucrat. Elias was over the moon. "It's about time. Now, I'm gonna propose to her again and this time round she's gonna say, Yes."

Little did he know that Amy was never going to change her mind. "Aren't you done tormenting me with this disgusting question? You know, I hate the very idea of marriage. My mother was divorced and that was a traumatic experience for me. I was supposed to celebrate today and you've ruined my mood."

"But, I've waited and waited for this day. I thought after achieving your dream, you were going to marry me. Please, say, Yes.

"Oh, come on! Don't force me. I am never going to marry anyone. Never ever."

"Then, I'm gonna have to quit. That's it."

"I need more time to think."

"I have made up my mind. You either say yes or you lose me."

"I can't say Yes."

"Goodbye then and remember you have broken my heart again and again and again."

Amy remained silent and just like that Elias was gone with the wind. For months, they didn't contact each other. Elias was hurled headlong deep into the abyss of depression. He was now a shadow of a guy he once was. He just wanted to erase his memories. Nostalgia was ripping his soul apart. Although it was incredibly tough, yet he wanted to move on. He would've been successful were it not for the ultimate betrayal. Elias was shell-shocked when he came to know that Amy had finally got married. "That's not possible. It can't be. Marriage, the very word made her sick to her stomach. Her father left her.... No, I refuse to believe this." That night he checked her Facebook and Instagram profile and he was stunned to see her wedding pics. Amy looked incredibly happy. Elias wanted to forget rather than forgive her but it was an impossible task. He had an amputated soul. He didn't have any desire to live anymore. "I am permanently scarred. They say that the scars are meant to fade away but what if the scars are invisible and spiritual in nature. There is no remedy, no salvation for me. These last three years have been an utter disaster. She literally used me like a tissue

paper and now I am left to rot for eternity. She can't get away with that. I won't let her."

Elias thought about it long and hard. He didn't want to do anything silly but the feeling of revenge was too powerful to resist. That night he decided to contact Amy via a fake ID.

"Finally, you've got married. Although it's surprising, I'm really happy for you. You deserve it."

"Who is there? Amy replied instantly. Her curiosity was aroused as usual.

"Maybe You're talking to your soulmate."

"I hate riddles. Reveal your identity posthaste or I'm blocking you."

"To die by your side is such a heavenly way to die. Does that ring a bell?"

"Oh my God! Elias, is that you? How I've missed you. Wow! This is unbelievable."

"I thought you were never gonna marry."

"Your premature departure was too much for me to bear. I couldn't cope with that loss. You were my one true love. I had to find a substitute in order to survive. I swear I wanted to kill you. I wanted to commit suicide. Marriage was the only remedy left for my broken heart. I remained loyal till the end. Elias, I still love you."

"Amy, I gave you three years of my life and you couldn't make up your mind and the moment I left you, you decided to marry. I'll never understand you. Anyway, there are no hard feelings whatsoever. I'm here to congratulate you. Your happiness means everything to me."

"Oh, Elias, my one true love. You'll always be with me. Our souls are inseparable. I am you and you are me. True lovers, and soulmates never truly depart. We're dead ringers. I love you."

"I love you too, Amy. I have a request and I truly hope you won't say no to me."

"Go ahead."

"I want to meet you. One last time and please don't say no. It will break my heart."

"Aww, Elias, tell me where do you want to meet me?"

"The same place where we first kissed each other. First and the last kiss at the same place, wouldn't that be poetic?"

"I'll be there."

"Saturday evening then?" "Done."

Saturday evening, Amy got to the place where she had kissed Elias the first time they met. Elias was already waiting there for her.

"Thank you for fulfilling my last wish. You still look like an angel."

"Elias, I wish I could turn back time. I wish I could kiss you again and again. I want time to stand still while I kiss you. I'm gonna miss you. I'm gonna miss your innocence, your unswerving support, your wisdom and of course your juicy lips. You should get married as soon as possible. You're still young and girls still drool over you."

"How times change," Elias gave a wry smile. "For three long years, you didn't let me talk to anyone and now all of a sudden you want me to get married. The irony is unmistakable, my darling. Do you remember the night when we first talked to each other?"

"Of course, my love. We had an amazing telephone conversation. Six hours without any interruption whatsoever. We were made for each other."

"Amy, I wish I had never fallen in love. I was treated like a slave. What if they made a movie about our particular relationship? What would be its title? Three years a slave? LOL.. I'm just kidding. Remember, we once swore an oath?"

"Oath?"

"If either of us was unfaithful, the offending partner would have to die."

Amy's heart skipped a beat. Now, she was afraid of Elias. But, she tried her best to remain calm.

"Hahahah, o yeah, I do remember that pact. But, surely we weren't unfaithful. Circumstances compelled us to say goodbye to each other."

"It's about time we kissed each other. This is our last kiss and I want it to be memorable."

They kissed each other passionately. While they were kissing each other, Amy felt something strange. She had swallowed something unknowingly.

"What was it, Elias? "Kiss of death, my love."

Elias had carefully inserted a poisonous pill into Amy's mouth during their last lip lock.

"Now, you're going to suffer a long and painful death. I gave you the best years of my youth. I invested time and energy into this relationship. I listened to the chorus of reproach every single night. I loved you passionately. I waited for you tirelessly. I remained loyal and what did I get in return? An ultimate betrayal? No, Amy, I couldn't let you get away with that.

You deserved this punishment."

"I loved you, Elias. How could you do this to me?"

"I loved you and you loved me. How could I let you go to another man. You were right, Amy. Our souls are inseparable. We couldn't grow old together but at least we're gonna die together. Elias had brought a shotgun with him. While singing the lyrics, "To die by your side is such a heavenly way to die," he shot himself. Both Amy and Elias died in the same spot. The words of Elias' sister were prophetic. Love indeed proved lethal for Elias.

L= Land of sorrows and suffering **O**= Ocean of tears

V= Valley of death

E= End of life

Buried Alive

"What the hell is this? Are you out of your mind? Have you taken leave of your senses? I mean nobody in his/her right mind would ever vouch for this madness," shouted Solomon trying to reason with his wife. "Madness? You call it madness? I waited for eight long years. I couldn't let it happen. I did what I had to do and there's nothing anyone can do about it," replied Susan. "You know damn well that it's illegal, immoral and horrible. Wake up! It's done. Your son isn't coming back. Exhuming a dead body is shocking and why have you buried him in your secret garden? I know you're in immense pain but this act is not gonna assuage that pain. In fact, your pain will capture your mind and your soul.. I know it's tough but you've gotta accept it."

"You don't understand. You will never understand it. Nothing is illegal or immoral when it is a matter of love. I haven't buried him. I have planted

him. Just like plants, he'll grow. I'll water him with my tears regularly and he'll grow. Don't stop me. Just let me do it. You don't have to tell anyone. It'll remain a secret."

"But, that guy saw you back at the cemetery. He might open his mouth."

"His beak is wet. His mouth will remain shut."

Solomon felt sorry for her. Susan had been a loyal companion. She was unfortunate enough to suffer two

m miscarriages. After eight long years, finally, she gave birth to a baby boy. She was ecstatic. Holding that baby in her arms was by far the best feeling for her. But, two days later, another tragedy befell her. The baby boy died. It was a tragic event for both Solomon and Susan but Susan couldn't cope with the pain and trauma caused by this tragedy.

So, she did something outrageously immoral by exhuming the dead body of her son without lawful authority. Solomon knew that Susan was desperate. Therefore, he didn't argue back and let her do that. For the next 12 months, they didn't plan a baby. Susan kept watering the grave of her son with her tears but nothing grew. Susan's patience had grown thin. She couldn't tolerate uncertainty anymore. On one rainy night, when Solomon was in his office, Susan decided to do something unthinkable. She went to the secret garden and tried to exhume the remains of her son again. She dug up the grave and found only the skull and the bones. "Where is my son? Good God! Somebody stole him again. Or did he disappear into the thin air? Or maybe he goes for a walk at this witching time of the night and comes back only in the early morning. Has he started walking already? I have to find out. I've gotta do something about it now. I can't sleep peacefully. I have to stay here. I wanna sleep with my son. I wanna hold him in my arms. It's been a year already. He must've felt so lonely. I have to dig up another hole."

Solomon spent the whole night in his office as he often did. In the morning, he came back and couldn't find Susan. Her mobile phone kept ringing but nobody answered it. He checked the CCTV footage and found out that Susan never left the building. He searched every nook and corner but couldn't find her anywhere. So, he went to the secret garden. His heart skipped a beat when he saw a shovel just around the grave of his son. He was shocked to see the skull and bones of his son. This was just the beginning of his agony. He couldn't believe his eyes when he saw another grave

beside the grave of his son. With his bare, trembling hands he started digging up that grave. He was absolutely crestfallen to see that Susan was

lying there. "Oh God! No! Please No! Not this, not in this fashion, please. This is too much to take. Susan, please, Wake up. I can't live without you, my love. Oh God! It's unbearable." Susan had died. She was buried alive. She had buried herself alive.

Save The Last One

"I have seen her again. What does she want? And what is she trying to convey with that victory sign? She's getting on my nerves," cried the eldest sister.

"Maybe, it's not real. You're too stressed out. Take a chill pill. She will disappear. Those tablets will do wonders," replied her husband.

"She's as real as it gets. I saw her too, last night...and that victory sign is recurrent. Mother saw it too," said the youngest daughter."

"Uzzi knows a guy who can tell us what she wants. We should go to that seer posthaste," pleaded the mother with unreal urgency in her voice.

That night the whole yorkie family paid a visit to the seer. The seer listened to the chorus of agony and horror and said, "Listen to me very carefully. What I'm about to say might sound crazy but it's true. There's a huge dragon that wants to invade your house and if that dragon manages to do that, there'll be no escape. That sign is not a victory sign. She is conveying a specific message with regard to the two family members who have the power to defeat that dragon. Your family had three members who were loyal. They were willing to put their lives on the line to protect you guys. You lost the first one namely the grandmother.

Now, there are only two left. The Yorkie house is slowly becoming a cemetery for pure, loyal souls. Make sure you don't repeat the same mistakes. Respect them, show them love. Otherwise, I'm predicting a disaster. That'll be the end of the Yorkies."

"Who are those two guys? We wanna know," said one of the daughters.

"I'm sorry. I'm not allowed to reveal their names. It's your riddle to solve. Heaven or Hell? Your choices will decide."

A few months later the father died. It was an untimely demise, an absolute bolt from the blue as he was fit as a fiddle or so it seemed. Now, there were two entities haunting the yorkies consistently. Instead of a victory sign, now the ghosts of the father and the grandmother were signalling "one" both with their index fingers. Once again, the yorkies were suffering. There was absolutely no escape. When medical science failed to cope with the consistent visions of the ghosts, they decided to pay a visit to the seer

again. Once again the seer informed them that the dragon was getting nearer and nearer. "I warned you all. You guys didn't take my words seriously. Mend your ways. That "one" sign means that there is only one person left. Save the last one. But, I guess you guys are doomed to repeat the same mistakes. The dragon is real. It's coming. Save the last one as that entity is the only one standing between the Yorkies and the dragon."

"But, how are we supposed to know who that last one is? And death is inevitable, how can we save him/her?" replied the mother. "My dear lady, there's a difference between a murder and a natural death. You guys tortured the grandmother and the father. They listened to your chorus of reproach consistently until the moment they snapped.

They couldn't take it anymore. You guys brutally abandoned them. You guys have murdered them and they're still trying to warn you instead of exacting revenge. You know who that last one is. The only entity uniting the Yorkies right now. The sands of time are running out. The dragon is coming."

The Yorkies left that place in utter horror. Since they didn't know who the last one was, they decided to treat each other with love, empathy and care. But, the Yorkies were hellbent on repeating the same mistakes over and over again. Within a month everything changed. One of the Yorkies, the favourite son of the father was being treated like a dog. He was being tortured incessantly, but the Yorkies were not willing to open their eyes. Another Yorkie was being brutally abandoned. The mother wanted to help him, but the rest of the Yorkies didn't let her do that. They all said behind his back, "He deserves to be punished as he is a crybaby and a weakling. And of course, he can't be "the last one" even if the story of that stupid seer and his imaginary dragon is true LOL..."

'The dragon could be real. Don't you guys remember the story, "There's No Such Thing as a Dragon?" In that story, the dragon really invaded their house."

"That was a story, mom. LOL. There's no such thing as a dragon," replied Uzzi.

The son had restricted himself to the four walls of his dark, depressing room. He was slowly drowning into the abyss of hopelessness and the grim reaper seemed to be on his way. The Yorkies didn't care. One day, the eldest daughter woke up and saw that there was an ominous, menacing figure occupying their house. The dragon had arrived. She came downstairs crying hysterically, "The dragon has arrived. The dragon was real. There is no way out. But, but, the last one didn't die. Who was the last one?" They all looked at each

other. There was only one guy missing. They all rushed towards the room of the son. They opened the door and there it was; his corpse hanging from the ceiling fan. They were all shocked. The mother almost fainted. "Please, somebody save my son. Oh lord! This can't be happening." It was too late. It was irreversible. Ego and indifference won, they lost. He was gone. He was the last one. They couldn't save the last one....

He means everything to me

The Characters: David

Mrs. David Edward

Joseph Rebecca

Act 1

Scene 1

Scene: Room of Joseph on a chilly morning in late January. It is a cozy room with an attached bathroom. There is an attractive LCD placed in front of a comfortable bed. At the rear wall just above the window, there is an AC.

Enters Mr Edward

Edward: Same old shit.

Joseph: What do you expect? They won't change, brother.

Edward: But, this is just too much and you know it. A human mind cannot possibly take more than that. I pity him

and by God! it hurts me like hell to see him being treated that way. He deserves respect.

Joseph: Oh, absolutely. But, the thing is they don't love him anymore. They treat him like a dog and he suffers in silence. What a man! After all that bullshit going on around him, he still provides every single thing they ask for.

Edward: I really am worried now. He might snap any moment. And I swear I'm gonna freakin' kill them if that ever happens.

Joseph: You really think so? You wouldn't be able to do a damn thing even if he dies due to this immense pressure. That's the thing with family. No matter how sinister they are, you just cannot possibly gather enough

courage to hurt them. I love 'em as well. How can we hate someone from our own bloodline. I sense something ominous coming our way. I hope sanity prevails.

Edward: I still can't believe that we have come this far. I know they love him as well. Why do they hurt him?

Joseph: Maybe in their minds they believe that he no longer means anything to them. As simple as that.

A sudden shriek is heard outside the room. Enters **Rebecca**.

Rebecca: What the hell is wrong with this guy? Sobs... Then gives another loud shriek. I hate him more than anything else in this world. I have always been loyal to him, served him, loved him, admired him but never such innocence again.

Joseph: Shut up! Just Shut up. He's your father. At least show some respect. You have really gone too far. How could a daughter possibly hate her father? The devil has surely corrupted your soul.

Rebecca: Oh, come on. I've always admired him but lately, he's been acting just like a wild beast. He just loves killing my dreams. He doesn't want me happy. That's all.

Joseph: What disgusting thoughts have you been nursing in your mind? Why don't you understand that whatever he is doing, he is doing out of love. Marriage indeed was the best possible thing for women. He just wants you to get married posthaste. The World is a terrible place and you know it. You know, there is so much burden on his shoulders. He never whines, never complains. The eternal dilemma of our father; the societal pressure, Diabetes and mama's relentless criticism; how can one man survive all of that? Please, for God's sake show empathy. Don't make life hell for him. There has always been a battle between duty and desire. And I know you've been in this battle for a while. For the sake of family, surrender. That's what we've been doing ever since we opened our eyes. Family is all. He is the head of the table. Just think about it. It's always duty over desire, my dear sister. I swear he has reached the breaking point. Don't push him any further. If death captures him at this particular moment, you would never be able to forgive yourself because I know deep down in your heart, you still love him. The same goes for mama. Quit this monstrous idea right away I implore you.

Rebecca: Enough of this emotional harangue. No matter what you say, you can never ever change my mind. He just wants to take away my freedom and I won't let him do that. That man doesn't mean a damn thing to me. It is by far my greatest misfortune that I'm his daughter. Do what you guys have

to do, but you can't stop me. Tomorrow I'm going away and there is not a damn thing you can do about that.

Joseph: By God! You've been blinded by your hatred. What you call freedom is nothing more than an attractive hellhole and time will show you. I swear you'll feel guilty one day.

Life is a long and tedious journey. Remember, this journey becomes horrendous if one gets trapped in the realms of eternal guilt and regret. I know that one day you'll regret doing all that. Regret is the most painful thing in life.

Rebecca: That ain't happening mate. I'm not doing anything wrong.

Exits **Rebecca**.

Edward: She has really gone too far.

Joseph: Don't worry. She'll learn her lesson the hard way.

Scene 2

The Same as before.

Mrs. David enters crying. **Mrs. David:** What did she say?

Joseph: She wouldn't listen. She has made up her mind. I promise you, she's gonna regret that one day. She wouldn't be able to live peacefully. This is just too much and you know it.

Mrs. David: What am I supposed to do? It's all his fault. I have been suffering endlessly for 32 years. That man has been a curse.

Joseph: That is an utterly outrageous thing to say. He's done everything in his power to improve our condition. He has been suffering from Diabetes. He is physically weak, but he still continues to work hard. All the perks and privileges that we've been enjoying are due to his incessant hardworking nature. Can't we be a little grateful?

Mrs. David: Oh, come on now. He is evil incarnate and I hate him.

Joseph: No, you don't. I know you love him.

Mrs. David: No, I don't. He doesn't mean a damn thing to

me.

Joseph: Don't say that. I swear these words are going to haunt you eternally.

Mrs. David: Forget it. Tell me what are we going to do now? I am worried about her.

Echoes of Agony 45 Joseph: You don't need to. Maybe, she has stopped caring

about us anymore.

Mrs. David: But, still she is part of our family.

Joseph: That is the only true dilemma. Papa suffers solely due to the fact that she is part of the family. You are familiar with the overwhelming influence of the society. You have to take society into consideration. She must have got married. Now, things are totally chaotic.

Mrs. David: I can only pray for her. **Joseph:** God have mercy.

Exit...

Scene 3

The living room of **Mr. David**. **Mr. David** sitting in front of the sofa. **Edward** serves tea and biscuits.

Edward: Need anything else?

David: No, that would do.

Edward: Stop overthinking. Everything's gonna be alright. **David:** Sighs... I'm fine. Don't you worry.

Edward: We must always focus on the brighter side of life. If she shows utter disregard for our family, we should repay her in the same manner.

David: We can't. She's very dear to me and your mother. She's family and you don't treat your family that way. She'll learn her lesson. Where is Joseph?

Edward: In his room. Should I call him? **David:** yes.

Joseph appears.

Joseph: Yes, Papa. What's up?

David: What did she say?

Joseph: Same.. I know she is not a bad human at all. Someone must have poured pestilence into her mind. But, at the moment, It's well-nigh impossible to reason with her. She doesn't care what the society has to say. She doesn't respect the family traditions anymore. She hates us. She is going away and we can't possibly stop her.

David: If this event unfolds, I won't be able to control myself.

Joseph: But, you have to. Please, I beg you. Stop thinking about her. Don't we mean anything to you? **David:** Where is your mother?

Joseph: In the Kitchen.

David: Let me talk to her one last time. **Joseph:** Mama, please, do come here. **Mrs. David** appears...

Mrs. David: Yes?

David: If she goes away, she is never coming back.

Mrs. David: Don't be silly. She's family.

David: Surely you understand the gravity of the situation. We have lost control.

Mrs. David: We are suffering because of you.

David: Me? What have I ever done to be treated this way?

Mrs. David: You ruined my life. I shouldn't have married you in the first place. You are a pure devil.

Joseph: Please, stop it both of you.

David: It is one of those days when nothing goes your way. I have been toiling right from the word go but we still have to pay debt. Although I have seen worse, it is pretty unbearable for me. I was born and bred in a mediocre family. My father died early when I was young. I always wanted to help my family and after grabbing a reasonable job I was definitely helping them. Then, I got married and I didn't remain complacent even for a second in my life. I gave you guys everything you ever wished for but still, I am hated.

Man is the unluckiest creature that ever walked on the face of the earth. No matter what he does for his family, he is never ever appreciated. I have totally snapped. Up until now, I had been able to brush away the pain and agony that life was consistently throwing at me. But, today Rebecca and your mother have caused my ego to fade away in the blink of an eye. I know she used abusive language as well and that has taken my soul away from me.

Joseph: With tears glistening on his face: Please, don't say that. We all love you. We appreciate everything that you have ever done for us. I am what I am because of you. I promise you, I'll make it right this time. Just give me one more chance. She'll get married because I know she loves you. This surge of hatred is just temporary. Everything's gonna be alright. Don't lose hope.

David: Maybe I've not been a good father, maybe we'll never be able to live happily. (David retires into his room)

Scene 4

Mr. David suddenly collapses in his living room...

Mrs. David: Oh my lord! What happened to your father? He has just collapsed. He is losing his consciousness.

Joseph and **Edward** run towards him.

Joseph: Papa, please, talk to me. You are not going away.

Mrs. David: (Crying frantically) Oh no! no, no, please... Oh God! Don't take him away from me. I love him more than anything else.

Joseph: Is he alright? Please, tell me he is alright. Is the oxygen mask working?

Edward: He is breathing. Yes, it's working.

Joseph: He ain't going anywhere. Oh God! Please, not this...This would be too much. (David stops breathing)

Edward: No way, no way...This can't be happening. He's not moving.

Mrs. David: What happened to him? Tell me, please. **Joseph:** He has died.

Mrs. David: Shut up... Just shut up...Oh God! It's an irreparable loss.

Joseph: (With tears in his eyes) Is it really a loss? He didn't mean anything to you anymore.

Mrs. David: Oh, no! noooo... No, please, don't say that. You don't know how love works. It was said in the heat of the moment. He means everything to me.

(**Rebecca** appears, crying frantically)

Rebecca: Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Oh, my God! I can't breathe anymore. He can't just leave us like this. Please, talk to me papa. I am sorry for everything that I did to you. I'm ready to do everything you want me to do. Please, wake up. This is too much. I never thought you would leave us. Please, I don't want to live a life full of guilt and regrets.

Joseph: Isn't it too late now? You had ample time to make things right. But, no, you were blinded by your unadulterated hatred. I swear this is not a natural death. It is a murder. You guys killed him. You pushed him to the limit. He couldn't take it anymore. You made life hell for him. You shouldn't be shedding tears now. You won the battle. But, I promise you, you have lost the war. Now, you'll suffer for the rest of your life. There is a God and He witnessed everything.

Rebecca: Please, stop it. I can't take it anymore. I swear I can't. I loved him more than anything else in my life. I remained loyal throughout my life. I just never thought he'd die. Oh God! It's so cruel. I couldn't even get the chance to say goodbye.

Joseph: You must pay for your sins. Guilt and regret will forever haunt you. But, I wish you the best of luck because that's what Papa would have wanted. Remember what you said? "He doesn't mean a damn thing to me."

Rebecca: Oh God! I would trade everything for his life. He means everything to me. I swear he means everything to me.

Curtains.....

About Time The Characters:

1. Ila 2. Ails

A decent little house in the middle of nowhere. A man sleeping in his room...A voice wakes him up...

Ila: Wakey, wakey...It's too late now. **Ails:** What time is it?

Ila: Does It matter?

Ails: Matter what?

Ila: The time.

Ails: Ah! The time...

Ila: You did it again last night. Didn't You.

Ails: Maybe I did.

Ila: Why can't you rid yourself of it?

Ails: Habit, you know.

Ila: Oh, yeah, habit. Habit is a ballast that chains the dog to its vomit. Who said that?

Ails: Don't know. But what of a dog? Haven't seen a dog in a while.

Ila: You need to take a bath.

Ails: Yeah, that too, out of habit or maybe out of compulsion.

Ila: Out of fear, out of obligation, out of necessity.

Ails goes to the bathroom, takes a bath, comes out, and takes his breakfast.

Ails: How are we going to kill it today?

Ila: Just like we kill it every day.

Ails: Don't have much to do. It will kill us someday.

Ila: Can't argue with that.

Ails: About time we did something substantial.

Ila: There's nothing substantial.

Ails: What time does it start today?

Ila: When it gets dark.

Ails: What are we going to do in the meantime? It's abhorrent.

Ila: A lot more other things are there.

Ails: It's getting worse.

Ila: Day by day, moment by moment.

Ails: Remember how we used to kill it in our childhood? Those were the days.

Ila: Ah! How can I forget those days...Good old days...

Ails: Getting up early in the morning. **Ila:** Going to the school.

Ails : Kites

Ila: Cricket, Sports...

Ails: Hell a lot of other exciting activities. Life was so very eventful back then...

Ila: Sure it was.

Ails: Music?

Ila: No.

Ails: You don't like me. **Ila:** I'm going to leave you. **Ails:** When?

Ila: Soon.

Ails: No, you can't.

Ila: Why not? That's how we were made.

Ails: We are inseparables. Duality, you know...

Ila: Don't you get tired?

Ails: Of what?

Ila: This robotic life? This artificial life?

Ails: There is no such thing as artificial life. There's life and there's death. That's it.

Ila: This is not real.

Ails: What's real?

Ila: You know it very well.

Ails: No, I don't.

Ila: Get out of this matrix while you can.

Ails: I have tried, I have failed.

Ila: "Fail again, fail better." Who said that?

Ails: Doesn't matter...They won't let me escape. **Ila:** They? Who are they?

Ails: All of them. What happened the other day? I went there...Everything's changed. Robots, emotionless entities moving here and there.

Ila: There's no hope.

Ails: There never was any...Hope is an illusion.

Ila: What just happened to them? What happened to all of us?

Ails: That guy in the movie was right.

Ila: Which movie?

Ails: That American movie...A man predicted that this would happen one day. The day is upon us. It was an experiment gone wrong. We are robots with no ability to think or reason.

Ila: Utter pessimism!

Ails: It's brutal af! I'm getting sick and tired of it already. Enough is enough.

Ila: What are we doing here?

Ails: A mystery.

Ila: The philosopher raises questions. **Ails:** That nobody can answer.

Ila: Religion?

Ails: Hell no!

Ila: Science?

Ails: Close but not really...

Ila: Is he real?

Ails: Could be.

Ila: No certainty?

Ails: No certainty.

Ila: Are we gonna get answers?

Ails: Don't know.

Ila: After death?

Ails: Not sure. After all those debates, after all those discoveries, after all this progress we're still not there. It's still delicately poised. All this knowledge but no forgiveness, no solace, no redemption...Thorns of life....bleed....

Ila: What should we do then? **Ails:** A safe passage.

Ila: Safe passage?

Echoes of Agony 56 **Ails:** A wise man once said that gambling is the name of the

game. Wager.... **Ila:** Wise man?

Ails: Yeah, that French philosopher. He too, was stuck. He gambled...He believed in it. Maybe he got peace.

Ila: Gamble in the game. Too many games we have. Who invented games?

Ails: People.

Ila: Why?

Ails: Because they were bored. Boredom is hideous. Some say it is the root of all evil. Some argue that boredom is the root of all creativity.

Ila: Maybe, the dead have all the answers. Maybe they are there.

Ails: Some say it's a conspiracy. **Ila:** A conspiracy?

Ails: A conspiracy.

Ila: What?

Ails: They think we're stupid and it's easier to manipulate us. We keep proving them right. How much time is left?

Ila: It's still not really dark outside.

Ails: What? We've been here for millions of years and it's still not dark outside? It's unbearable now. **Ila:** What should we do?

Ails: Let's try and kill it **Ila:** How?

Ails: Stories?

Ila: No, please. I've got tired of them. Every day those same old stories.

Ails: But, you never pay attention. They have some valuable lessons to offer.

Ila: There's nothing new in them. Age-old myths. They fill me with utter disgust.

Ails: Once, he was sitting alone. He was thinking about his loneliness.

Ila: Why is He even " He " Who told us?

Ails: His people.

Ila: Who were his people and why did we believe them?

Ails: They were his near and dear ones. They had proof. They came and they told us what He was all about.

Ila: What else did they tell us? **Ails:** That he loves us.

Ila: I don't believe it.

Ails: Once He was all alone. Then He did something strange. The greatest display of abracadabra...He didn't remain alone anymore. He was alone and He just did something about it.

Ila: One day it'll all be over. He'll be alone again.

Ails: Then He'll do something about it again. **Ila:** He doesn't die at the end of the story?

Ails: He never dies. Not in any story. Not in any version of the story.

Ila: He is not one of us.

Ails: We are different. We are born into this abyss of

hopelessness. We suffer, we cry, we laugh, we die. **Ila:** We have emotions. What about him?

Ails: Only time will tell.

Ila: He doesn't care. He has seen everything but He doesn't do anything about it. Some say He's an absentee landlord. He left this place a long while ago. We were marooned.

Ails: Anarchy, sufferings...Ah! What a shitshow! What a piece of miserable crap this pathetic life is!

Ila: Some say there's life after death. **Ails:** Who told you?

Ila: Religious people say so...One day this lifeless life will be devoured by a deathless death. What am I saying?

Ails: That's dangerous.

Ila: It gives them hope...Redemption.

Ails: I'm scared of it.

Ila: Scared of what?

Ails: Resurrection. We'll be beaten brutally. **Ila:** We are beaten brutally every single day.

Ails: Every moment.

Ila: The moment we step into this world.

Ails: From cradle to grave.

Ila: Why did we come here?

Ails: Nobody knows.

Ila: We were not asked?

Ails: No. We were there. We couldn't go back. There was no chance. Is it dark outside now?

Ila: It's getting dark. We're almost there.

Ails: I'm getting excited. That feeling fills me with joy.

Ila: Soon, it'll start and you'll be overjoyed. Then in almost no time, it'll be over. You'll be faced with 'it' again. You'll be bored. How would you kill it then?

Ails: I've been killing it for years and years. I've got millions of ways to kill it.

Ila: You'll get bored. You know what? **Ails:** What?

Ila: You're a fighter and you fight reasonably well. But, there's only one problem.

Ails: Problem?

Ila: You get tired but, 'it' is indefatigable. **Ails:** Definitely has 'His' support.

Ila: 'His' greatest weapon. 'His' greatest creation. Always wins.

Ails: It will die one day. It will be no more.

Ila: Some religious people say so.

Ails: Tragedy of a modern man; He thinks he has tamed it.

Ila: Everyone's a victim. The rich, the poor, the young, the old.

Ails: Children?

Ila: Debatable point.

Ails: Hmm..

Ila: It's fairly dark outside now. About time.

Ails: Finally.

Ila: Yeah finally.

Ails: It starts.

Ila: Temporary. Soon it'll be over and you'll be crying again like a bitch.

After a few hours.....

Ila: It's over.

Ails: Didn't take long.

Ila: It did. You didn't notice. **Ails:** What time is it?

Ila: About time... **Curtains.....**
